Boston Association
Its Excommunication of
Theodore Parker,
and some correspondence
thence ensuing.
Mostly original documents
of 1842–1845

[redacted]

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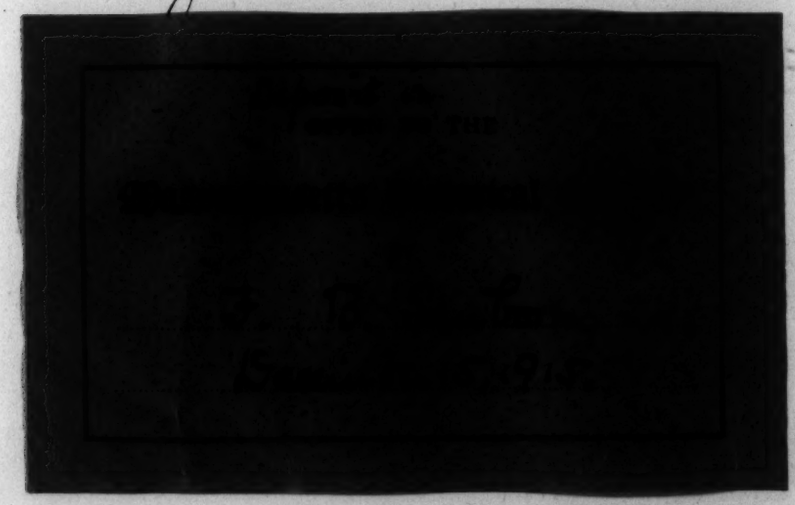

you of. If I can come to Mullingar by Dublin. But I in turn visit the "chapel" from the south at Coronde, and from I can indulge in no fanciful spiritual blessings. I am ever in heaven and symbolic

Yours truly
W.A.G.

Dear friend with
I have read with
interest your letter
to an unknown Father
Yesterday in
reading Emerson's
letter to his
students. It
seemed
like yesterday
Yours truly
W.A.G.

meant to be a friendly sally and a playful challenge. (though springing from serious conviction) for I trample a "contradiction" changed into so rude and ungracious an attack, that I cannot feel easy in not explaining it, before I sleep. Elizabeth and I were talking of your lecture, just as you joined us, and I felt a need to tell you what I had been saying of you, which was in a word this, that "I thought in your mode of statement you had done no justice to your own conviction, or else that your conviction differed from mine, which I did not believe". So when you came up I said "I felt in conscience bound" – and lo! and behold instead of you only & Elizabeth, I was throwing out my criticisms to those who had heard and known nothing of what had passed. The hearing us in such formidable loneliness completed my discomfi-

10 P.M.
Yesterday I felt to be faithful to my friend, and I seemed bound, and I felt you why. Did I tell you aright. If you do not, I will go back to Mullingar to-morrow and see you certainly. Forgive me if I was wrong.

A 1

time, and I know not when I have been more pained than when at parting I thought I saw that you had misunderstood me! dear Eliza, if you will allow me to call you so, do not think that I could so purposely or even carelessly allow myself to trample under foot those courtesies, which are sometimes so sacred as between nearest friends. My heart was full of respect for your noble frankness, and of love for the character which you have manifested, and of congratulation for your richly deserved triumph. And yet I ale but insulted you - Well! Shall I ask you to forgive. No! That you did at the moment I will know. Don't I do wish you to understand it. It was the simple feeling of sincerity. That I must say to you what I had said of you, which hurried into my most unfortunate solitude for a few hours lecture, in which you had proved out a form as your Superior feeling. Though I questioned your philosophy, believe me I had echoed back your stirring words. Your spirit looked into mine, and saw there I trust some reflex of the infinite

Father, utter shine through your own. Your lecture was felt in the essential tone, in the life there was in it. And it was great joy to see how all felt it to be so. Dear brother! Providence daily demonstrates may be proportion your strength to the great work he has given you to do. I felt to night, that you were an actor in a great reform, the issues of which are yet unseen. In that grand movement the hearts of thousands upon thousands are already flowing on. Your simple faithfulness, your true truthfulness have won the nations and sets from many a struggling spirit. From your South-Boston sermon dates among us a new era of Freedom. Would that we agreed more fully in the results at which we have arrived; (though the differences are not as great in reality, I suppose, as in the prominence we give to different truths which both receive) for these without an "if," "but," "peradventure," or explanation of any kind, could I defend your part. But your faithfulness to your own convictions, your faithfulness, rather let me say to the "Spirit of Truth" I

would procure, and honour, by invitation. And I am going to do so; indeed have done so in a small sphere. But I propose commencing a periodical Jan'y. which will be an Organ of Swedenborg and Swedenborgian expression on

PAID

Rev. Thos. Parker.
Mrs. Roxbury
Mass.

BOSTON
MASS.
paid.

all the great subjects of interest. This will be in connection with the religious society we are about forming. Among other things I propose there in various ways to review your book, and I shall send you it. Indeed if you can feel prompted to write for it. I shall rejoice in your aid. I propose to allow you many good things, which I should like to tell

My dear Parker

[illegible] I do not know [illegible] that I do not [illegible] your feelings. I did not [illegible] it. I felt honestly [illegible] to see you [illegible] towards you when you [illegible] to question the correctness of your judgment on any any point, cannot be a breach of the law of love. I did not. I do not question your sincerity & honesty of purpose. I do not hold you responsible for evils incident to the pursuit of that purpose, evils wh if real, I am confident no one would lament more than you. The it natural & perfectly consistent with the best intentions that you should underrate the reality & extent of these evils. If you saw the case as I do you would do differently in some respects. But I am not such a fool as to blame you for not doing it as I do. I should despise you if you acted by my judgment or any means against your own honest convictions of duty.

A 2

And you ought not to think it unfriendly in me to express a difference of judgment. If I felt less friendly I should do it less friendly. I fear however I obtrude my views unreasonably & too boldly.

That I should say any thing painful to you, anywhere would grieve me. I met to do it in my remarks. I appeared to draw you out of the idea of this to no right conclusion on my part. If I did so it was unintentional & I beg your forgiveness. I never felt more kindly towards you than then. I felt no personal severity on account of your coming here to return. I do not feel any. The effect so far as relates to me may be to estrange some of my congregation from me, so far that my ministrations will not satisfy them. So far as this effect results I shall be philosophical enough to trust that it will prove best for them & me & all concerned.

There was a time when it was among my fond hopes that we should be intimate brothers & take sweet counsel together much & often. How far this is prevented by the speculation separation occasioned by your advancing & my receding from our old common ground I cannot tell. Whether the gap is to widen or narrow I cannot tell. Our public relation to each other is much changed. Not at as great a sacrifice of personal

feeling on my part as I remember ever to have made.
- I am resolved I will cherish personal respect &
friendship for you forever if possible - nor will I speak
ill of you - nor do you harm if I could - I shall love
you as much as you will let me.

With regard to the emotions wh you could not suppose
on monday. tho I am not authorized to asserter it to
any thing but my friendship for wh I should apologize.
yet I will confess. That one solution wh took strong hold of
my mind is this - that it was not unkind words of mine,
but that my words. brought by my agitation. the thot of
the hard & thorny path that lay before you.
the sacrifices you must really in pursuing it.
the offences that must come. the ties broken, the misconstruction
& opprobrium you must encounter, - the heavy & galling
burden laid upon you by what you deem truth & duty.
I think higher of you than to believe that these crosses are
compensated to your heart by any popular applause &
multitudinous following. - If you are true & single hearted
you must be a man of sorrows. - tho the world around
may say you are tickled with notoriety. are happy with
that & want nothing more. - That is not my opinion of you yet,
may it never be. - These things came over you - hence
those tears? — But I do not say this in idle curiosity to draw
an explanation. but only to do you justice.
I intended only a brief apology. & lo this long letter. - God bless & guide
you. - If you are what my heart delights to take you for, then however you may feel towards
me. I shall ever honor, pity & love you as a brother. - G. Putnam

Copy of a Letter to Rev E S Gantt.

West Rusty April 4. 1843

Dear Sir

In your excellent address on Dr Channing - or rather in a note appended to it - p. 37, you state that Dr C "retained till the last, nearly his belief in the preexistence & superior nature ---- of Jesus X." as this defies a good deal for what I have had men say in conversation - I write to ask if he made such a statement deliberately - & provided it within a few days of his death -. I feel quite certain about this matter - for I had no doubt prior to reading your note, that he believed in the heresy of X, that is a very modified one - it may be, if I could not have trusted you with a note, that as you said the other day that you "could never take my hand cordially again" I that a letter better than a personal interview.

Yours truly
Thos Cobb.

A

Copy of a Letter to Rev E S Gaunt.

West Rudy April 4. 1843

Dear Sir

In your excellent address on Dr Channing - or rather in a note appended to it - p. 37, you state that Dr C "retained till his latest moments his belief in the preexistence & superior nature ---- of Jesus X." as this differs a good deal from what I have been in the habit of considering - I write to ask if he made such a statement deliberately - or provided it within a few days of his death -. I feel quite anxious about this matter - for I had no doubt prior to reading your note, that he believed in the Divinity of X, tho' in a very modified sense - it may be, I should not have troubled you with a note, but as you said the other day that you "could never take my hand cordially again" I thought a letter better than a personal interview.

Yours truly
Thos Cobb.

A

Dear Sir

Pardon me for not sooner acknowledging your kind letter of Nov. 1st. I was not worthy to receive it & my thing but nothing for my absence of daily at least only. Your selection of Jack Clem strike my mind as fine. Hardy was left behind somewhere but that my words but in consideration the story he has a strong particular claim upon you.

In reading you must remember in mercy of the man that must be in the midst of the mistakes you must make in learning it.

Pardon Pardon Pardon

Dear Sir:

Yours Truly

Dear Sir:

I think from what you say I believe that there are large complications to your business and my friends will have a multitude of difficulties to overcome. If you are firm that I shall be a man of honour. In the world around many days you are faithful with nothing. You to be left out that cannot be thing more. That is why my friends appear at times of more to. These things are now you — have there time? — But I do not say this in jest merely to show you a picture. But only to be your friend.

Remember only a word about Jack Clem letter. Use his friends — If you are with Jack tell you for the honour you may put towards I shall ever keep that you are a brother. Yours

Yours

Copy of a Letter to Rev E S Gaunt.

West Rusty April 4. 1843

Dear Sir

In your excellent address at Dr Channing's ordination in a note appended to it - p. 37, you state that Dr C "retained till his latest ministry his liberal principles & reverent nature ---- of Jesus X." as this defines a good deal for what I have had mine say in conversation - I write to ask if he made such a statement deliberately & premeditated within a few years of his death - I feel quite earnest about this matter - for I had no doubt prior to reading your note, that he believed in the Divinity of X, that is a very undefined term - it may be, I should not have troubled you with a note, but as you said the other day that you "could never take my hand cordially again" I felt a letter better than a personal interview.

Yours truly
Thos Cobb.

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Sir Walter Raleigh
Part of Letter

Copy of a Letter to Rev E S Gantt.

West Rudy April 4. 1842

Dear Sir

In your excellent address on Dr Chung - or rather in a note appended to it - p. 37, you state that Dr C "retained till his last moments his lively interest in the prosperity & religious welfare ---- of your X." as this declares a good deal for what I have had him say in conversation - I write to ask if he made such a statement deliberately & formally, within a few hours of his death -. I feel quite certain about this matter - for I had no doubt prior to reading your note, that he believed in the heavenly X, that he was a very undeceived man - & may be, I should not have troubled you with a note, but as you said the other day that you "could never shake my hand cordially again" I thought a letter better than a personal interview.

Yours truly
Thos Cath.

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[See another Letter of Garrett in Journal I. p. 89. date June 19th 1841.]

New York April 15. 1803.

Dear Sir

I wish to reply to your letter before I left home, but I have so many things to do that I could not. Your inquiry is similar to one which I have received from other quarters, though never in so direct a form before. When I wrote the statement to which you refer I had, as I believed, decisive evidence in support of its truth. It corresponded with my own impressions and with my recollections of conversations held in former years with Joe Smith, with the impressions of Mr. Phillips & other friends, but especially with the testimony of a lady who told me two years ago Joe Smith in her presence explicitly avowed his belief in the future state of Christ. Since the publication of the address I have been informed by another person present at the conversation referred to by this lady, that the purport of Joe Smith's remarks was really misunderstood by her. What he really said then, his views have been of late inclining to a rejection of this doctrine. Still he does not declare himself to be an unbeliever in it, & still volunteers himself to be an unbeliever in

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[See another letter of Garnett in Journal I. p. 84. dated June 18th 1846]

New York April 15th 1903.

Dear Sir

I wish to reply to your letter before Christmas, but I have so many things to do that I order it. Your inquiry is similar to one which I have received from other quarters. Strange enough in a direct form before. When I wrote the statement to which you refer I had in my hand, designing evidence in support of it. It corresponded with my own impressions, including recollections of conversations held in former years with Stanton, but the impressions of Mr. Stanton's other friends, but especially with the testimony of Judge Wheaton and other gentlemen who had been in Lincoln's confidence in the matter of the Emancipation Proclamation. Since the publication of your article, I have been informed by another person present at the conversation that Judge Wheaton's reference to the purpose of Lincoln was a mere misunderstanding of her, that he really said that the matter had been under his consideration for some time. Still he did not declare himself to be an outsider, and I feel satisfied

A 4

my persuasion of the correctness of Julia's and
when your letter first set me upon a more careful
inquiry. I went to the immediate family. Mrs Channing does
not speak confidently on the subject. William
says that in conversation with his father he (Dr C.)
expressed at least a comparative disregard for the
doctrine of the preexistence, William's belief was
that his father had ceased to include it among
his articles of faith. But upon inquiring of Mr.
Eustis, he tells me that he had conversations with
Dr Channing on the subject the last summer (or
few weeks therefore before his death) & the previous
summer, on both of which occasions Dr Channing ex-
pressed his belief in the "preexistence of human
souls" upon God's accounts & they were pass-
ing further elaboration of Scripture. This is conclusive
evidence - perhaps the most decisive that can ever
be had, since William's let the conversation on the
subject by declaring his own dissatisfaction with such
views. My belief is, that Dr Channing during the latter
years of his life attached less & less value to the facts
of Christ's preexistence, & held it rather as a critical than
as moral grounds, but that he never relinquished
his faith in the doctrine

Permit me now to add a word in reference
to the closing sentence of your note. Did I say that
"I could never take cordially take your hand again";
as that I could not cordially take it again, meaning
of course (I did not say) while our relations continued

to be what you had made them, & chose to have them,
take. It seems some strange that you do not see this
matter in the same light under which I view it —
you publicly impeach the purity of my motives,
hold me up to the censure & contempt of the com-
munity. as far as your influence extends impair
my usefulness by weakening or destroying the confidence
effected in me, & yet do not call me knave & hypo-
crite, render it not a violent inference from what
you say, in a communication to the public, that you
think me so. All this I hold that you do, when you
speak as you have spoken of a body to which I belonged
in whose proceedings I took an active part. An
opportunity is sought for conference with you upon the long-
we you have seen fit to use. I refer you were it
and the force & effect of your expressions. & that —
would have led you to regret that you had put
them in print. But in this conference, instead of utter-
ing a word of explanation or regret, you remark that
upon this point you "have nothing to say", that the article
must stand upon its own merits. In not, this deli-
berately refusing to efface the painful impression which
your words has left on my mind, & in effect saying,
"you misunderstood me, sir, & repeat the opprobrious
judgments which I have given offence"? I cannot
conceive of circumstances under which one man should
tell another more emphatically that he has a low opinion
of him — nay, more, that he deems him guilty of temporizing
dect that entitles him to neither respect nor the esteem
of his fellowmen; & that after this I shd cordially take you
hand as he an act of cowardly or falsehoodedness that

you so justly deserve. I can take your hand with kindness & goodwill, but not with cordiality, so long as the imputations you have cast on my character are suffered by you to remain without a word that indicates a sense of their injustice. How can there be a cordial feeling towards one whom you represent as so unworthy of regard, as I confess, what I cannot understand. It seems to me that you have built up a wall between our hearts.

Snyder Page

PAID

Rev. Hopkins Porter
West Roxbury
Mass.

NEW YORK
APR
15

I trust that you will now perceive the relations in which you have made us stand to one another. They do not spring out of any theological differences. However great these may be, while we consider one another good men in our purposes & lives, we can entertain mutual cordial regard. But when one of us pronounces the other unfit to be held in esteem, must there not be a reciprocal occasion of complaint? Nothing however, I hope, will ever prevent my doing justice to your character & motives, nor from subscribing myself truly yours, Gratefully & affectionately

West Roxbury 22. June 1843.

My dear Sir

I must confess your letter has given me a good deal of surprise, — more from its general tone of distrust & coldness than from any particular statement it contains. Believe me I never thought hard of you because you said I ought not to attend in a Xn Pulpit. I supposed that judging from your point of view at that time, it seemed so. But as to catholic — for in point of view all Protestants — all Protestant sects is a false position, & not entitled to the Xn name, but me. I never thought hard of you for that —. I have sometimes heard of hard sayings of yours relative to myself, from my friends & my foes, that implied personal ill-will, dislike, odium theologicum. I never believed you entertained them. I forgot them, totally do so still. after fishing about for words — I "have caught nothing." Perhaps I have said unjust things about you ~~done you injustice~~, sometimes; perhaps not. I certainly never designed to do so, & acquit you, & always did acquit you, fully as I acquit

A5

supply - of our unpaid interviews. I have sometimes wondered at your course -; you have marvelled at mine. I doubt not.
I wondered at what you said at ~~that meeting~~ before of the Association at Waterston's. But ~~that - a word at shall of me,~~ I never judged you - never felt disposed to ~~even hereafter~~ you explain of my letter of last Autumn. (or written it may be -) I don't remember the contents of the letter at all. I do remember it was written in agony of spirit (I am very no public time;) such a state of mind will not produce agn. Was unjust in anger, or sentiments but in ~~[illegible]~~ "I don't know what you find in it that "impaired your personal respect" for me; I am at a loss for conjecture on that point. ~~Neither do I~~ I do not think there has been any thing marked in my manner towards you since, with the remembrance of that interview in your study, fresh in my mind. It is not to be wondered at - that I did not repeat my visit. I am very glad to believe that I misunderstood you then - still I do not see how it was possible, ~~for we in my position at that time~~ under the circumstances to have understood it differently. Since that time he has not

only at school-committee meetings: perhaps once or twice
in a both stare, I thought I saw an increased coldness
in your manner. (Forgive me if I did wrong) I never men-
-tioned it; but was merely more reserved. Yet not always
so. I have sometimes chided with myself for a single moment,
as I thought, more confident & warm towards you than
you were towards me. But the feeling passed away in a
moment. I have, sometimes, in the course of the last two
years, found my advances towards me ~~the same~~ as my friendly
warmheartedness, frankness, not
with anything but similar advances & warmheartedness. I
am rarely learning to be more watchful; perhaps a
little suspicious. But I should never have <u>been</u> to
learn that bitter lesson, but for some sad experience. As
for the matter of exchanges - I have uniformly defended your
course - not because it was the course I would think it
right to pursue under similar circumstances but - because
I always thought you were conscientious in the matter. I was
surprised two years ago that you offered to exchange with
me, much more than at what you told me last

entertain. I always thought before them, that your natural affinities

honestly led you towards the party of the permanent, the old.
Since the ministers talk on I could not help seeing you & observing
I then began to think I was wrong. What subsequently happened but
confirmed the opinion. Tho I did right in yielding to you
but you should do the same by me.
back the old opinion. I have often said that I thought so, never that
I thought your dissenting was out of place in the Church. But all

Copy of a letter to
Rev Jas Parkes

I make no complaints. I have been hastily disposed
this tends to nothing. Perhaps you will think
it let me ~~thinks~~ this what effect. You can at any rate
of this letter as of the last. So so if you meant,
shall bear it, & remain still as heretofore

truly your friend.
Thos Parkes

[Confidential] This was never sent

West-Roxbury 28th Dec. 1849.

Dear Sir

I have wanted to write you for a week or more, but have forborne because I thought you would possibly misconstrue the motives which led me to trouble you with this epistle. But I can now restrain myself no longer. Will you rightly appreciate my motives? I know not. You have misunderstood my motives & intentions, even my words sometimes — you may now —, I cannot help it if you do. I only beg you to consider the arguments I am about to offer, & do them justice whatever you do to me. I write to you because I know your influence — an influence deservedly exerting on your noble character & indefatigable efforts for the great cause of man, of Xty. If I had not more confidence in you than in any of your Boston associates I should not write at all. But I will come to the point. I understand that the affair of Mr Sargent will come before the Central Board of the Patent of Christian Work. That Bd will ratify or reject the measures adopted by the Executive Council (or committee) relative to the resignation or dismissal of Rev Mr Sargent. I suppose they will ratify them. I have no personal feeling in the matter at all. I waive all considerations of personal delicacy in speaking of the matter. If S. had been thus dealt with for exchanging with another person under similar circumstances

A 6

I should have felt no delicacy about Theodore. But I ask—are the Boston Unitarians—are you yourself prepared to take this ground to new to the Unitarians, that it is a matter of censure for a minister to exchange with one who agrees with the Unitarians in all matters of Theology, except this about certain historical matters—which as I think have nothing to do with Religion? You will not deny—I say this not boastingly for God knows, & he do I, that I have nothing to boast of—that I am as moral & religious as the majority of Unitarian ministers. Is there Sermon to be excluded because he exchanged with one against whose moral & religious character you had nothing to object—solely because that one differed in Theology—in historical theology too? Are you ready to make this issue before the world. The Unitarians have a theological creed—not printed but latent—& if a man differs from that (latent) creed & another exchanges with him, he that so exchanges is worthy of censure, worthy of exclusion from a pulpit he holds from the Fraternity of churches, tho' no moral or religious blame attaches to the man who thus differs? I can hardly believe it. I know you as a conscientious man—who love the truth;—who pursue Righteousness—& practice it too; but do you suppose that the Unitarians have attained all Truth—all Righteousness? May not a man differ from you or me & yet have truth on his side? You say somewhere that I have done the Unitarians much harm—if I understand you rightly, do not you in that

that you are making me do you more harm by thus identifying me with Pendon in religious matters? Somebody showed me an article in the Recorder about this matter. The praise the Recorder bestows on me was intended to detract from the merit of the Unitarians, I think it was that same person, when the South Boston sermon was preached, that suggested I should be shut up in the State prison for blas=phemy. The Spirit has not changed. Don't you see what a good you will give them for charging the Unitarians with inconsistency with strong dislike Spirit towards others they are blamed of, when shown towards themselves? Look at the case. I am a member of the Porter Association; preach the Thursday Lecture & all that, yet you drive away from his post — from the affections of his parish — gather & watch over by years of prayers & self-sacrifice — you drive away a noble man, who finds contributors of their substance to build the chapel — to adorn & beautify it; a man who has wasted his own substance for the poor of his flock, solely because that man exchanged with another member of the Ass. who differed in historical theology from the rest — & in his place you put a stranger, who has made no sacrifice, is comparatively unknown to you — & is (I am told) a quite inferior man! I may have errors enough in my creed — God grant I may change them away — But Sargent does not share them. He is not theological, is not learned in these matters, has not, God bless him, made it his business to "study out dark matters". He has kindly spoken

with me. It is that the exchange would be profitable to his parish. They do not complain that it was unprofitable. It has done the work that has been planned with the Unitarians & Sharpe will blast it. It has done one of the noblest things of the day! At that memorable meeting I had with the Ch. 2 years ago – it was said – that my "theological views might be overlooked – but for that article on the Hollis St Council." I think that was true. Since that time I have not changed – my theology has not changed. Is it that Sargent is to be thus punished because he has exchanged with one who censured the Hollis St Council? He was himself a member of that Council – one of the party censured! I think you have done nobly in exchanging with Pierpont since the Council adjourned. I honour you for it, & have been my testing in your behalf for that, many & many a time, but if you suffer the acts of the Executive Committee & the action & violation of the Central Bd. & Sargent to be disregarded – I will think you honest & conscientious as ever, but I ~~shall~~ must have my hand when you warn in mention, & I ~~shall~~ must say It has not Parker but Styles Garnett that did the Unitarians the most harm. I beg you to excuse me for writing thus & you above all to excuse me for throwing praise in your face. I don't ask an answer – only that you will consider what you are going to do. I write this letter to be regarded as entirely private & strictly confidential – with kindest regard I remain

Your friend & Xn Bro'

Theodore Parker

West-Roxbury 5th Jan. 1845.

My dear Brother

We have just received your letter i.e. Harriett's — & am very sorry at your disappointment, but Lucy wishes me to say that if you think it best, she will, in part, supply the place of the man who has disappointed you: — that is, that she will invest on her account $5000 dollars in the enterprise, if you can find a second person to take the other half, then the relations that you will stand in the same relation to the enterprise that you wished to do at first. She wishes to know what success you had with Mr Robeson's orders, or have yet you yet been able to execute it? I have had no reply from Mr R; indeed my note (considering the circumstance of your visit to him) did not require an answer. Please write circumstantially the condition of the enterprise, when you write the first part. of money &c, &c.

I remain truly yr Br.

Thos. Parker.

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Boston Jany 7. 1845.

Dear Sir

It was my intention last week to bring the matter of your last Thursday Lecture before our Ministers' Association at their next meeting, & to propose some action on their part — such as a public disavowal of connexion with you in the opinions which you there advanced; & I meant of course to inform you of my purpose. But I learned that some of the other brethren entertained the same purpose, though they were disposed to offer a resolution somewhat different in form from what I contemplated. It seems to me therefore, I should also, Hearing, — still more proper that you shd know the subject will be brought forward at our next meeting —

A. B.

Copied

Boston Jany 7. 1845.

Dear Sir

It was my intention last week to bring the matter of your last Thursday Lecture before our Ministers' Association at their next meeting, & to propose some action on their part — such as a public disavowal of connexion with you in the opinions which you there advanced; & I meant of course to inform you of my purpose. But I learned that some of the other brethren entertained the same purpose, though they were disposed to offer a resolution somewhat different in form from what I contemplated. It seems to me therefore, & to them also, that it will more proper that you should know the subject will be brought forward at our next meeting —

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Copied

Boston Jany 7. 1845.

Dear Sir

It was my intention last week to bring the matter of your last Thursday Lecture before our Ministers' Association at their next meeting, & to propose some action on their part — such as a public disavowal of concurrence with you in the opinions which you there advanced; & I meant of course to inform you of my purpose. But I learned that some other other brethren entertained the same purpose, though they were disposed to offer a resolution somewhat different in form from what I contemplated. It seems to me therefore, & to them also, desirable, — still more preferable that you should know the subject will be brought forward at our next meeting —

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I would much rather the discussion should proceed in your presence with your participation than in your absence. I hope therefore you will come to the meeting, which will be at Wm Blanke's in Mount Vernon Street (near Charles Street) next Monday afternoon. As you have spoken plainly - you will let us, I am sure, speak plainly too. But I hope we shall never forget the distinction which should always be regarded - which in this case allow me to add is so manifest - between the doctrine we deplore & the character we admire - between the teacher & the man.

Yours sincerely

Edw L Garnett

BOSTON
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Rev. Theodore Parker

West Roxbury.

Mass.

Boston 22d March 1845

My dear Sir

I have just finished reading your Letter to us. Good! We must answer it, or consent to meet the consequences of standing mute. — I shall not attempt to answer it; nor do you expect that I should. But some of us must. I like your outright speech, and your manly tone. It must be respected, and it must, and, I hope, will be answered in a tone as manly. The correspondence will do good, let who will be the respondent. — "I like this rocking of the battlements." The agitation is as necessary in the theological as in the ethereal atmosphere. It is wholesome — salutary, i.e. tending to salvation. So, let it come! —

But I write you this to correct a small error in your statement of a fact that relates to myself — You remark, that "only three, Mr Gannett, Mr Sargent and Mr Clarke — if I am rightly informed — have extended that fellowship to him (myself) since the time of the famed Hollis-Street Council" p. 10. — The fact is this — "only three" of the clergymen or pastors of the Churches represented on that "famed" Council have extended to me that fellowship — viz. Mrs Gannett, Sargent, and Waterston. — Clarke & Bartol have offered me exchanges,

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But neither of them, nor either of their churches was on that "famed council."—

I state this, because I know that you are a "seeker"— an inquirer after the truth, and that you give a hearty welcome to whatever appears truth to your own mind. And the truth is as I have stated above, in relation to the ministerial fellowship intended to me by my brethren since the censure of an Ecclesiastical Council fell upon my devoted head:— a censure, by the way, for which I would not take a small sum of money.—

I wish you to know the vote I gave on the question of surrendering the Thursday Lecture— "the great and Thursday Lecture"!— I voted "Aye"— for I have been trying for many years to get rid of it; regarding the preaching spit as a sacrifice more costly than any profit to be derived from it would justify.— I am glad that it is thrown off from the hands of the association. You were right,— I think in refusing to withdraw from it. Better, a great deal, be thus "circuitously" excluded from it.—

I see that I am on the external threshold of my church— i.e. on the threshold, with my face as though I would go out of it entirely. A few days probably, and they who were once my people will be not my people. Then the world will be all before me— not where to

chasse" as it was to Adam — but where I am to get my living as I can, during the remnant of my pilgrimage. — My proprietors have, at length condescended to make overtures for a negotiation for an amicable dissolution of our relation, and that negotiation is now going on. This they might have done, had they been so wise, six years ago, and "have saved all this harm and loss." — Well — had not the controversy taken the turn it did take, there would have been no "famed Hollis St. Council" — no "Result of Council" and no Review of that Result, in the Dial — very possibly no Conference, at Watertown, two years and more ago, and no "Letter from Thos. Parker to the Ministers of the Boston Association" — and possibly, too, no knowledge of "the Gospel according to that Association!" — How the destinies of some men are interwoven! —

But an end to my long yarn. I began expecting to write three lines (or more) and lo! three pages.

Your friend & Brother
for truth & righteousness

Ch. Pierpont

To the Rev. Theodore Parker
Boston
Mass.

Rev. Theodore Parker
Boston
Mass.

[Copy]

24 March. 1845.

Dear Sir

Your note of this day has been this moment opened & read & I return it only. 1st. I remember once to have been told that you had written an article for some Periodical - I don't remember what - which - for some reasonable or unreasonable opinions, was excluded from that Periodical. I may have stated that such a report had reached my ear, though, at this time, I have no recollection of the time, place or person whom I chose to show it to, nor have I the Report. If I did I gave it as a report - for I never saw such a paper as you allude to, nor heard the contents of any journal writer that he had reported such a paper. 2. I never had in my possession any letter or handwriting of yours that expressed opinions similar to my own - & of course further I never said I had such - you do see in an obscure note, it appears; but I can value opinions a "ripe scholar & good one" whether we stand shoulder to shoulder or face to face - I know much of Rationism & doubt about the truth of what I hear - & my general knowledge of a man enables me to qualify the special things I hear.

I am respectfully officially yours

Rev Dr Rottenstein. Thos Parker

A 10

[Copy.]

West-Roxbury 25th March 1845.

Reverend Sir

I have just received your note of this day & hasten to reply to it. I am very to say that it does not appear to be dictated by that excellent heart which I have always given you credit for possessing. However I shall pass over silently the unpleasant remarks you make about myself - for I am not yet so easily startled from my composing humour. I must repeat to you, my dear Sir - that I still feel confident that you said the words I have attributed to you, on the occasion that I mention. I have a very distinct recollection of the conversation in Winchester Street, & have by no means confounded it with the meeting at Mr Waterston's. Possibly you will recollect it the better perhaps when I relate some other remarks which you made at the time; your mind - adverting to the results of some one - this happens on at the main stay, we could overlook Mr Brook or Religion - it would have been forgiven & forgotten but for the article in the H. S. C. In that he "poured scorn & contempt on an Institution" &c. I was surprised at the statement at the time - & under the circumstances inexplicable for that reason - a good

A. 11

[Copy.]

West-Rayburn 25th March 1845.

Reverend Sir

I have just received your note of this day & hasten to reply to it. I am sorry to say that it does not appear to be dictated by that excellent heart which I have always given you credit for possessing. However I shall pass over silently the unpleasant remarks you make about myself - for I am not at all easily startled from my propriety of manner. I must repeat to you, my dear Sir, that I still feel confident that you said the words I have attributed to you, on the occasion that I mention. I have a very distinct recollection of the conversation in Winchester Street, & have by no means confounded it with the meeting at Mr Waterston's. Possibly you will recollect it the better perhaps when I relate some other remarks which you made at the time, your mind - adverting to the remarks of some one - His benefits are not the main thing, we could overlook Mr Brooks or Robinson - it would have been forgiven & forgotten but for no article in the H. S. C. So that he "honored Sam & contempt or an Shelters" &c was surprised at the statement at the time - & under the darker interpretation for that reason - a good

A. 11

many things was said on that as well as other occasions that surprised me. I prepare them long ago — yes before my own attempt — but it is not so easy for a well-trained running to forget — as for a xn heard Discipline. I think by our lr. when you reflect on this whole matter you will come to the conclusion that you running was pursued with unfaithful for this time. I will excuse me if I still retain my the opinion which I have expressed in the "Letter", as I understand that you are now to visit the old world. Allow me the satisfaction of wishing you a speedy & healthy passage — the blessing of a variety beneficial places & the happiness for friends. Remember my and the service — of returning welcomed & well to the arms of your friends & relatives. Believe me

Yours very faithfully

Rev Francis Parkman D.D. Theo Parker

P.S. I beg you to greet the excellent Unitarian clergymen at Manchester & Liverpool for me — & to carry my respectful remembrances to Dr Hutton of London.

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Yours very truly

Rev Francis Parkman D.D. Theo Parker

P.S. I beg you to greet the excellent Unitarian clergymen at Manchester & Liverpool for me — & to carry my affectionate remembrances to Rev Dr Hutton at London.

Charlestown, March 10. 1846.

My Dear Sir,

Your Letter addressed to Rev. Chandler Robbins has been put into my hands as I am at present Scribe of the Berkshire Association of Congregational Ministers. From a hasty glance at the records I perceive several references to yourself, your course & your relations to the Brethren, wh. it will take me some time to copy. I have many engagements wh. will occupy my time fully for some days, but if you will kindly allow me a little delay, I will transcribe for you all that you wish. The Entries were made by Messrs Robbins & Coolidge. Should you prefer it, however, I will send the Records to you — if you will instruct me where you wish to have them deposited, or by calling on me you can copy them at my house.

Very Truly Your Friend
George E. Ellis

Charlestown, March 10. 1846.

My dear Sir,

Your letter addressed to Rev. Charles Lowell has been put into my hands as I am at present ye Scribe of ye Boston Association of Congregational Ministers. Upon a hasty glance at ye records I find several references to yourself, your course & your relations to ye Brethren, wh. it will take not less than [illegible] to copy. I have many engagements wh. will occupy my time fully for some days, but if you will kindly allow me a little delay, I will transcribe for you all that you wish. The extracts were made by [illegible]. Should you prefer it, however, I will send ye Records to you if you will inform me where you wish to have them deposited, or by calling [illegible] you can copy them at my house.

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Rev. Theodore Parker
West Roxbury
Mass

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Rev. Mr. Lunt of Quincy called the atten=tion of the Association to a Book recently pub=lished by Rev. Theodore Parker, wh, he said, con=tained opinions which were startling & shocking to his mind, & demanded some explanation on the part

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At the same meeting it was also
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Geo: Whitney
Secy pro tem

June 1837 -

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POSTAGE
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Rev. Theodore Parker

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Rev. Theodore Parker
West Roxbury
Mass

Extracts from the Records of "the Boston Association of Congregational Ministers" - of all the passages relating to Rev. Theodore Parker, of West-Roxbury - made at his request.

(No entry appears upon the Records of Mr. Parker's request - after his Ordination, to be admitted to the Association, or of the usual vote of the Brethren consequent upon the request of a Minister after his settlement over one of the Parishes within the territorial limits of the Association. By this accidental omission of the Scribe of the Association at that time (Rev. George Putnam), the Records do not give the date, nor even the fact of Mr. Parker's admission.

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of the Association. He thought that the silence of the Association, together with the fact that Mr. Parker still retained his membership involved the Association in the blame and odium which the religious community in general attached to the sentiments of Mr. Parker. Remarks were made by several of the members upon Mr. Parker's Book, & upon the impropriety of his retaining his connection with the Association. Nearly all the members who spoke were of the same opinion & feeling as had been expressed by Mr. Lunt. But as the number present was not large, the subject was laid over to the first meeting of the Association in Boston in November, in conformity to a motion by Mr. Lunt — "That the Association at their next meeting in Boston do take into consideration the sentiments of the Book recently published by Mr. Parker with a view of determining whether it becomes them to take any action in the matter".

The next Record is upon page 15, as follows; "1842, Nov. 13. Met at Rev. F. T. Gray's.

At the call of the Moderator (Rev. Dr. Gray) Rev. Mr. Lunt introduced the subject proposed by him at Mr. Putnam's Oct. 9. for consideration this Evening. After some conversation, the prevailing opinion appearing to be opposed to

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the resumption of the deferred discussion, another subject was offered by Mr. Lothrop, viz: The Expediency of Dissolving the Association — wh. the Association agreed to adopt as the question for the Evening. An animated conversation ensued, in wh. many of the Members participated. Towards the close of the meeting the Brethren were very generally found to agree in the opinion wh. was forcibly urged by Rev. Mr. Gannett, that it would be better to attempt to revive the interest of the Members in the Association, & to increase its value, than to destroy it.

On motion of Mr. Gannett, a Committee was appointed to revise the Rules & Orders of the Association, & to propose some plan by wh. the meetings may be rendered more interesting & profitable. This motion passed in a modified form, as follows — To report upon the future action of the Association.

The Committee was appointed as follows, Rev. "Messrs. Gannett, Lothrop, Barrett, Lunt, & C. Robbins."

The following Extract is from page 16. —

"1842 Nov. 28 Met at the house of the Scribe, (Rev. C. Robbins.)

Bro. Gannett read an elaborate Report from the Committee appointed at the last meeting.

On motion, Voted, That the separate clauses or suggestions of the Report be separately considered. The first suggestion, wh. was in the language following, was then made the subject of discussion, viz:

"That in looking at the difficulties wh. have been stated, or are presumed to be felt, concerning the future action of the Association, it has appeared to them from the remarks made at the last meeting, that the publication of certain opinions & remarks by Mr. Parker, of West-Roxbury is the occasion of much uneasiness, wh. stands in the way of the future harmonious & efficient action of this Association; & therefore they recommend that y. Scribe be directed to inform Mr. Parker that several of our Members feel themselves pained & aggrieved by the promulgation of opinions wh. he has advanced in his Book on Religion, & in other writings believed to have come from him; & therefore desire that a frank & friendly exchange of views & feelings take place between him & the other Members of the Association; & for this purpose, that at the next meeting of this body, such a conversation be held, in the hope that his engagements will allow him to attend that meeting."

A free & full expression was given to the views & feelings entertained towards Mr. Parker on account of his published opinions & his remarks derogatory to the professional honesty of the Brethren. The opinion appeared to be very nearly unanimous that

the Members of the Association had sufficient reason for feeling aggrieved by Mr. Parker's remarks, & that certain of his opinions were at variance with Christianity considered as a particular system of religion. The Brethren, however, very generally expressed their unwillingness to continue such a train of remarks in Mr. Parker's absence — their regret that he could not be present & listen to what they felt it their duty to say — their respect for him as a scholar & a good man, & their desire to do & say nothing in relation to him, except in a spirit of Christian forbearance & love.

No direct action was had upon the first clause of the Report wh. had been under Discussion, & yet disposition to be made of ye remaining sections of ye Report was left for future consideration.

At ye close of the Meeting Mr. Gannett offered the following Resolution as embodying the spirit of the previous conversation: Resolved that ye Moderator (pro tem.) of this Meeting (Mr. Pierpont) be requested to inform Mr. Parker in the course of the following fortnight that his writings & remarks have been the subject of conversation this Evening, & it is ye wish of the Brethren present that the conversation be continued at the next Meeting, in his presence, and with his "participation."

The following is from Records page 19.

"1842. Dec. 12. Met at Bro. Lothrop's. —

— After tea, Bro. Gannett, on the part of Bro. Pierpont, who was absent, reported, that an interview had taken place with Mr. Parker who expressed himself gratified with the course the Association had taken in regard to him, & avowed his willingness to meet with the Association in the manner & for the purpose wh. they had proposed, after ye conclusion of his Lectures at Charlestown which were to be delivered on Monday Evenings during the course of the four or five next weeks.

The Report of the Committee on the future action of the Association was taken up for discussion.

On motion of Bro. Lunt voted that so much of the Report as relates to Mr. Parker, be, for the present, laid upon the table."

The following is from Records page 21.

1843. January 23. Met at Bro. Waterston's.

Mr. Parker met with the Association agreeably to their request. A frank & kind conversation was held with him in regard to his published writings — his alleged censorious & injurious remarks — & his position relatively to the Association.

With reference to the Deistical & Im=

ficial character & tendencies of his "Discourse of Religion", & other publications - wh. the Brethren without a dissenting voice attributed to them, Mr. Parker plainly avowed himself a Disbeliever in the "Supernatural" claims of the New Testament.

In answer to the objections made against his Article in the "Dial" on the "Hollis Street Council, & other of his writings, as unjust & ungenerous to his professional associates, he replied that he was not responsible for the inferences that might be drawn from his words, and that he was not prepared to soften or take back anything that he had said. He stated, however, that the true character of some of the objectionable remarks was not understood.

In regard to his position relatively to the Association, he avowed his intention to remain a member, unless the Brethren themselves should exclude him."

All the above entries in the Records are made by Rev. Chandler Robbins. On his resignation of the Office of Scribe, - the Rev. J. T. T. Coolidge was appointed - by whom the remaining entries were made.

No further reference is made to Mr. Parker,

unit the following - on - Records, page 39. -

"Jany 13. 1845. Met at the house of Rev. J. F. Clarke.

Dr. Frothingham proposed for the consideration of ye Meeting, ye subject = "Should any action be taken by ye Association in relation to the preaching of the Thursday Lecture by Mr. Parker? If any, what?"

The Association were of opinion that it should act in some manner & various modes were proposed. One; that Mr. Parker be informed the Association excuse him from preaching ye Lecture. Another; that Mr. Parker be requested to withdraw from the Association, & that a Committee be appointed to set forth clearly & definitely ye grounds of that request. A third; to publish a declaration disclaiming all countenance of the views of Mr. Parker as set forth in ye last Lecture preached by him. Other suggestions & modes were offered; but difficulties surrounded the whole matter, & after a long evening ye Association adjourned; ye subject laying over to the next Meeting."

Again - on Page 40.

"Jany 27. 1845. Met at the house of Rev. C. A. Bartol.

The subject of the preceding Evening was resumed. Mr. Lunt presented the following Resolu=

tion. 'Resolved, That the Rev. T. Parker of West Roxbury be requested to dissolve his present connection with the Boston Association of Congregational Ministers: and that a Committee be appointed to communicate this Resolution to Mr. Parker, and to make known to him in an open & kind manner the reasons that have moved us to make this request.'

Many amendments were offered & discussed. It was finally laid upon the table. At the close of the Meeting the following Resolutions were passed:

Resolved, 'That a Committee be appointed to wait on Mr. Parker, and confer with him on the subject of his relation to this Association, & report at a next meeting.'

Resolved 'That Messrs. Gannett, Robbins of Boston, & Weill, compose this Committee.'"

Again, on Records, page 41.

"Feby. 10. 1845. Met at the house of Rev. Chandler Robbins.

The Committee appointed at the previous meeting made a verbal Report of their Conference with Mr. Parker. On motion of Dr. Nothingham, it was —

Voted, 'That the thanks of the Association be presented to the Committee, & that their Report be accepted.'

The general subject was then returned — but no definite action taken, & at a late hour the Association adjourned; further consideration of the subject being appointed for the next meeting.

Again, on Records, page 41.

"Feby 24. 1845 Met at the house of Rev. R. C. Waterston.

The subject of the previous meeting returned. Many propositions were offered by various members for the purpose of relieving the Association from its embarrassment, & it was finally,

Voted, 'That from & after March 6th next, the care of the Thursday Lecture shall be relinquished by this Association, and restored to the Pastor of the First Church, to whom it originally belonged.'"

The above is a true transcript of all the passages in the Records relating to Rev. Theodore Parker, whose membership of the Association according to usage, ceased on his resigning his Pastoral charge of his Church & Society.

George E. Ellis —
Scribe of the Association

March, 11. 1847.